

A CARVED STOREHOUSE AT ARAPAWAITI, WAIKANAE

ROGER NEICH

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In 1984, while employed as an ethnologist at the National Museum of New Zealand, Wellington (now the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), I arranged the purchase by that museum of two carved side panels, or *rauawa*, of a large pataka or raised storehouse. Subsequent research has established that these side panels belonged to a large pataka that previously stood at Arapawaiti, a Maori village on the southern side of the Waikanae River close to the present settlement of Otaihanga.

Both of the *rauawa* panels (Museum of New Zealand registration numbers ME.14466, ME.14467) are about 70 cm wide and 6 m long, with a pronounced transverse convex curve facing outwards, as seen on many *rauawa*, especially those cut from disused canoes as was a frequent practice. Lashing holes are spaced regularly along both the upper and lower edges to enable the structure of the pataka to be lashed together with plaited flax fibre rope. Equally spaced along both *rauawa* are four stylised full-frontal figures carved in high raised relief (Figs 1, 2), although the bodies are more naturalistic than the heads. Some of the figures have finely detailed surface decoration about their heads. The workmanship is fairly cursory, with the figures blocked out in large chisel cuts, almost certainly the work of metal tools.

Before the National Museum obtained these *rauawa* they were last at the Waikanae Golf Club. Oral testimony recorded at the time of purchase stated that they had been “brought from Otaki by Willie Field” (pers. comm., Peggy Lady Fleming 1984). Fortunately, a former ethnologist of the Dominion Museum, William J. Phillipps, had recorded some field notes that clearly locate these carvings to Arapawaiti, although he apparently did not know of their survival at that time:

On April 4th 1952, Mr Peter Beckett of Paraparaumu took me to visit Mrs H. Eudy living at Arapawaiti at the mouth of the Waikanae River. Here Mrs Eudy lives in a large old house once an hotel of the old coaching days, and said to be the oldest dwelling on the west coast between Wellington and Palmerston North. Mrs Eudy tells us of a pataka which when she was a child some sixty or more years ago stood in the yard of this hotel. According to Mrs Eudy it stood on six legs. Old milk cans placed upside down were used at the tops of the piles to prevent the entry of rats. On the sides were large carved boards. These were eventually given to Mr W.H. Field. (W.J. Phillipps, Ms papers, Canterbury Museum)

Mrs Hana Eudy (actually spelt “Udy”, her husband being Len Udy of the early settler family from Petone) lived in the large house at Arapawaiti that had once been the local hotel and accommodation house in the old days when the horse-drawn coach route between Wellington and the Manawatu ran along the coastal beaches. According to Ramsden (1947) who had also interviewed Mrs Udy, this house had been built in about 1843 by Tom Wilton, a

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Fig. 1. Figures carved on storehouse side panel ME.14466. Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Negative numbers B.016279–B.016282).

former whaler from Kapiti Island and his Maori wife. Ramsden reproduced a photograph of this house, but no other structures are visible nearby. Another similar photograph reproduced in Maclean (1988:169) also does not show any other structures nearby. Several other sources (eg. McLean 1988:58; Macmorran 1977:117) state that the former whaler was Tom Wilson, his wife was named Hanake Te Awaawa, and the house was built in 1848. When the coastal

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Fig. 2. Figures carved on storehouse side panel ME.14467. Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Negative numbers B.016286–B.016289).

coaching service was inaugurated some years later, their house at Arapawaiti became an important staging post for coastal travellers.

Hana Wilson, a daughter of the Wilson's, married Henry Augustus ("Harry") Field, an accomplished Maori scholar who ran the hotel from 1878 and represented Otaki in Parliament from 1896 until his death in 1899. Mr and Mrs Field lived in this Arapawaiti house and Mrs

Udy who was living there in 1952 was a foster child of the Fields. The Mr W. H. Field who received the pataka carvings during Mrs Udy's lifetime was William ("Willie"), a younger brother of Henry Field, his successor in Parliament, and the same "Willie Field" who brought the carvings to the Waikanae Golf Club from Otaki. Clearly, this information confirms that these two rauawa are from the pataka that once stood at Arapawaiti.

From these notes and the carvings, the form of the pataka can be reconstructed. It almost certainly had the standard structure of a Maori pataka, possibly with uncarved frontal boards or perhaps the original frontal carvings had been lost so that Mrs Udy remembered only the carvings on the side panels. The pataka was raised on six piles, no doubt with three on each side of the building. The upturned milk cans were a modern innovation, more effective than traditional downcurved timbers. At six metres long, this was an exceptionally large pataka, matched in size only by such outstanding historic storehouses as Te Puawai-o-Te-Arawa at Maketu and Nukutewhatewha at the Hutt Valley (Phillipps 1952).

As Mrs Udy remembered the pataka, it stood in the yard of the hotel during the 1890s and therefore probably earlier. Before the Wilson's house was built, Arapawaiti was a Maori settlement, just north of the main larger Waikanae Te Ati Awa pa of Kenakena. It is possible that the pataka had stood at Arapawaiti before 1848 as part of the original Arapawaiti Maori village. However, a search of early views of Arapawaiti by artists such as Swainson and Gilfillan, and later photographs by Adkin and others do not provide any evidence of the pataka. Consequently, it is difficult to be more specific about its construction date.

The main hapu living at Arapawaiti was named Ngati Rukao, a hapu of Te Ati Awa. Other Te Ati Awa hapu associated with Arapawaiti were Ngati Rahiri and Ngati Kaitangata (Carkeek 1966:110). Arapawaiti was also known as a "village of the Whanganui people", apparently because there had been much intermarriage with the Whanganui tribes. Just across the Waikanae River to the north of Arapawaiti was the site of the battle of Te Kuititanga, the last major tribal battle fought on this coast. This took place in 1839 between Te Ati Awa and Ngati Raukawa, both tribes being allies of Te Rauparaha who watched the progress of the fighting from a whaleboat offshore. During the battle, and afterwards in the peacemaking, the people of Arapawaiti played a prominent role. Consequently, this pataka could possibly be associated with several different tribal groups, most notably Te Ati Awa, Ngati Raukawa and Whanganui.

The eight figures on these rauawa have bodies in varying degrees of naturalism, all without any surface decoration. Five of the faces are stylised according to the usual conventions of Maori carving and have some limited surface decoration carved around their eyes and mouths. In stylistic terms, these rauawa carvings show some close relationships to the carved figures of northern Taranaki Te Ati Awa style, as seen on so many of their pataka carvings (Day 2001). One of the rauawa figures has an arm passing under a leg and with the hand to the mouth, reminiscent of the entwined sinuous figure compositions of northern Taranaki. Four have enlarged eyes tapering into lower facial areas, so frequent in northern Taranaki.

In another close stylistic relationship, the rauawa figures can be matched with low relief figures carved on a model canoe prow (Fig. 3) deposited in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, England in 1877. These canoe prow figures display elements of both Taranaki and Whanganui carving styles, perhaps suggesting an origin in the southern Taranaki tribal areas.

On one of the rauawa (ME. 14467), three of the figures have round, more naturalistic faces without any surface decoration motifs. These may suggest a relationship to Whanganui carving style.

Some other close correspondences in style are to be found on a storehouse threshold, or paepae, 283 cm long, 45 cm wide and 9 cm thick, from Otaki, now in Whanganui Regional Museum (accession number 1886.16). This paepae (Fig. 4) has four figures spaced equally

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Fig. 3. Model canoe prow with similar figures carved on the sides. Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford PR 2075. Photos: Auckland Museum.

Fig. 4. Figures on a storehouse threshold, paepae, from Otaki. Whanganui Regional Museum 1886.16. Photos: Auckland Museum.

along its length, all of which display body configurations and facial forms similar to those on the Arapawaiti rauawa. But there are also notable and important differences on the Otaki paepae figures, especially their complete body decoration of haehae and incipient spirals, their pointed elliptical eye sockets, and their mouths wider than their eyes.

Phillipps (1952:112) has related the figures on the Otaki paepae to the type of figure carved by Te Motu Heta who was of Ngati Raukawa and Waikato descent. Te Motu Heta is credited

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Fig. 5. Te Tokanganui-a-noho house at Aotea Harbour. Photo: P. 13, Forgie Album, Negative Number C29,056, Auckland Museum.

with the carvings on the Kauwhanganui house at Ngaruawahia (Phillipps 1955:216) that include small dancing figures called *Kaeaea-te-rangi* by the carver Piri Poutapu. Similar figures were carved on the *maihi* and *paepae* of the former old house Te Tokanganui-a-noho (Fig. 5) at Aotea Harbour. Phillipps (1955:218) noted the similarity of these Aotea figures to those on the Otaki *paepae* in Whanganui Museum. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the differences in carving style and size probably indicate that this *paepae* and the Arapawaiti *rauawa* are not from the same *pataka*.

In summary, these stylistic correspondences suggest that the carver or carvers of these *rauawa* had close tribal relationship with the *iwi* of Te Ati Awa, Whanganui and Ngati Raukawa. Given the known tribal affiliations of the people living at Arapawaiti, these connections are to be expected, probably suggesting that the *pataka* was carved and built by local people.

In the 1850s, eight *pataka* situated at strategic places in the North Island were designated as Pillars of the Maori King Movement, termed *Nga Pou o Te Kingitanga* (Phillipps 1952:102–103). These are said to have stood at Taranaki, Otaki, Whanganui, Pito-one (Petone), Wairarapa, Waiohiki (Hawkes Bay), Taupo and Waikato, although some of these were possibly built for other previous reasons as well. This concept may also have been a metaphorical figure of speech, not actually referring to specific *pataka* at every locality.

Phillipps (1952:110) suggested that the Otaki *paepae* now in Whanganui Museum may have come from the Pillar of the King Movement situated at Otaki. However, given the extremely

large size of the Arapawaiti pataka, it is feasible that this may have been the pataka referred to as one of the Pillars of the King Movement. During this time in the 1850s and 1860s many of Ngati Raukawa at Otaki and Te Ati Awa at Waikanae were strong supporters of the Maori King Movement (Carkeek 1966:95–100). Certainly, the Arapawaiti pataka would have been the most prominent storehouse in these districts in its time.

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R. NEICH, Auckland Museum, Private Bag 92018, Auckland, New Zealand.